encourage stronger commitment to sustainable forest management, including in the form of adequate funding and monitoring, in a coherent, cross-sectoral framework and with a fully engaged civil society.

Particular emphasis is placed in the present report on the value for Governments of civil society being involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring of sustainable forest management policies. Emphasis is also placed on the particular contribution that civil society can make to strengthening awareness of the importance of cross-sectoral policy frameworks given its experience living in and near forests.

I. Introduction

1. The present paper is submitted, as a contribution to discussions about the future of the international arrangement on forests, by the following six major groups: children and youth, indigenous peoples, the scientific and technological community, farmers and small forest landowners, women, and workers and trade unions. These major groups, which represent organizations that cover a major portion of civil society in most countries, have been active participants in the sessions, inter-sessional meetings and initiatives of the United Nations Forum on Forests, and in meetings and activities organized by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. They have also participated in regional and international networks and are deeply committed to increasing both the protection of forests as ecosystems and the socioeconomic benefits arising from forests. In the present joint paper, the major groups acknowledge the contributions of the international arrangement on forests and identify what they believe are its failings and the reasons for those failings. They offer views on how the arrangement can be improved and on how their contribution can be more effective.

2. The impressive analysis presented in the report entitled "Independent assessment of the international arrangement on forests" was a major resource in preparing the present paper.

II. Accomplishments of the international arrangement on forests

3. Broadly speaking, the international arrangement on forests has made two types of contributions to the sustainable management of the world's forests: it has advanced the debate and raised awareness about the issues facing forests; and it has contributed in a number of ways to improving the tools available for strengthening sustainable forest management.

4. The arrangement has provided a global platform for forest policy dialogue among Governments, including at the ministerial level, and between States and forest-related stakeholders. Through analysis and dialogue, it has developed understanding and increased awareness of key aspects of global forestry challenges, such as more complete recognition of the full range and extent of the socioeconomic benefits arising from forests. In particular, it has encouraged some substantive discussion on the following key issues: traditional forest-related knowledge, improving livelihoods and poverty eradication, social development, land tenure and community-based management. It has directed the world's attention to forestry issues by marking the International Year of Forests and the International Day of Forests. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests has also provided an important opportunity for holding a broad-based dialogue on forests.

5. The adoption of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and its four global objectives on forests was a major achievement and a positive contribution of the international arrangement on forests. Some improvements have been made in terms of raising awareness of the many benefits derived from forests (see global objective 2) and increasing the practice of sustainable forest management (see global objective 3).

6. Best practices and criteria and indicators related to sustainable forest management have been more rigorously defined and promoted, and related experience has been exchanged as a result of the international arrangement on forests. Much work has been done to develop guidelines for national forest programmes, streamline forest data reporting and publish databases. The arrangement has facilitated the application of these tools to policies and programmes in a number of countries and has contributed to the development of a results-based monitoring and evaluation framework for tracking progress on implementation. It has also led to the development of many new tools, such as the sustainable forest management toolbox and the Forest and Farm Facility of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Global Forest Watch.

III. Contributions of the major groups to the accomplishments of the international arrangement on forests

7. In general, civil society complements the role of Governments in the development and implementation of effective sustainable forest management policies. Through various organizations, civil society raises the awareness of Governments and others about local forest-related social, economic and environmental realities. People in local communities in or near forests are keenly aware of the impact of forestry practices and changes in those practices on forests. Civil society actors exchange information about experiences of progress and regress, both within countries and globally, through networks that help to identify critical issues and seek to raise awareness about them.

8. In particular, civil society contributes a cross-sectoral perspective on the broad implications of forestry practices and sustainable forest management. The closer a civil society organization is to the local level, the stronger that perspective, simply because people do not live and work mostly in discrete "sectors". Similarly, families, women, youth and communities with rights to forests do not live and work in "biodiversity forests" or "bioenergy forests" or "timber forests" or "carbon-storage forests" or "food-security enhancing forests". There is just one forest, and people experience the range of benefits gained from that forest and the challenges in sustainably managing that forest as an integrated whole. This perspective is critically important in increasing the effectiveness of policies that seek to improve sustainable forest management.

9. Civil society organizations can help to mobilize support for policy initiatives and can contribute directly to reducing the costs and increasing the effectiveness of some aspects of policy implementation. For example, the involvement of local communities in the protection of forests has led in many cases to better protection at a lower cost.

10. In practical terms, civil society organizations play a valuable role by assisting in monitoring the implementation of sustainable forest management policies, in parallel with official monitoring and reporting procedures. Monitoring by active and motivated local civil society groups can help fill gaps and, in some cases, be a valuable corrective to official procedures.

11. These kinds of contributions are made in many places around the world and the potential to increase them is virtually unlimited. Taking action to realize this

potential is an essential requirement for making significant progress on forest-related issues. Such action must be carried out jointly by Governments and civil society with the support of a renewed international arrangement on forests.

12. Major groups have made contributions on behalf of civil society in the Forum process in several ways. For example, the space given to the multi-stakeholder dialogue during Forum sessions has gradually increased. At the tenth session of the Forum, there were even some hints of genuine dialogue between major groups and representatives of Member States, and several references were made to points raised by major groups in the report on the session. The capacity of major groups to present a more cohesive voice in Forum sessions has increased as well. In 2011 and 2013, seven of the nine major groups contributed joint discussion papers and established the Major Groups Partnership on Forests to strengthen the coherence and clarity of their input. Although progress has been made in enhancing the contribution of major groups to the Forum, however, that contribution is extremely limited and much could be done to increase it.

IV. Weaknesses of the international arrangement on forests

13. Major groups are deeply troubled by the state of the world's forests and the trends regarding the implementation of sustainable forest management, which has been uneven and incomplete. Many specific proposals have been neglected, including, for instance, those related to traditional forest-related knowledge of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (see E/CN.17/1997/12, paras. 32-40) and of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (see E/CN.17/2000/14, paras. 73-75) and those related to indigenous peoples. Many States have not ratified the eight core conventions of the International Labour Organization and codes of practice related to decent working conditions.

14. In general, indicators and targets to track progress in implementation have not been developed.

15. In the case of global objective 1, the situation is getting worse in many tropical forest regions, where forest degradation is having disastrous global consequences, as recent analyses of the causes of the current Ebola crisis demonstrate.

16. The current state of progress towards global objectives 2 and 3 is also discouraging. Poverty continues to persist in many forest areas among forest dwellers and workers. The full involvement of indigenous and local communities and small forest landowners in forest management and benefit-sharing continues to be resisted in many countries. There are many gaps in respect of recognizing the rights of workers, women and indigenous peoples and communities, and recognizing and strengthening the ownership rights of women, small forest landowners, communities and indigenous peoples requires particular attention. Moreover, there are still many cases of child and forced labour. Efforts to involve young people in all aspects of sustainable forest management are rarely carried out with a sense of urgency.

17. In the case of global objective 4, the gap between financing needs and the actual flow of funds is growing.

V. Factors contributing to limited results

18. In general, limited political commitment, insufficient financial resources and a continued lack of coordination among competing departments within many Governments are important barriers to progress.

19. Specific gaps in areas and tools that are fundamental to achieving progress on forest issues include:

(a) Recognition of the strategic importance of and the need to prioritize investment in all types of capacity, including research and development in basic and applied science, and in forestry education;

(b) In forestry education for both young foresters and field practitioners, much greater attention needs to be paid to social forestry and agroforestry, monitoring tools, training in certification programmes, such as those aimed at reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (see the REDD+ mechanism), and health and safety training;

(c) Fully developed sustainable forest management indicators;

(d) An effective framework for monitoring and compliance;

(e) A recognized accounting system for measuring the value of public goods derived from forests, with a particular emphasis on drinking water, water for agriculture, carbon storage and biodiversity;

(f) A more complete valuation of the contribution that forests make to meeting subsistence needs and of the contributions made by women, small forest landowners, communities and indigenous peoples to sustainable forest management;

(g) Progress in applying the recommendations set out in the *Guide to Investing in Locally Controlled Forestry* published by The Forest Dialogue, among others, and the ongoing work of Forest Connect. These processes have produced a comprehensive set of specific recommendations for ways to strengthen policy frameworks that will encourage increased levels of sustainable forest management and increase local employment creation, on the basis of the demonstrated track record of strong results where they have been put in place;

(h) More research relating to non-timber forest products and the value to health of forests.

20. The ability of the Forum to contribute to overcoming these barriers is limited by several structural constraints, such as the requirement for consensus on the agenda for Forum sessions, which limits the scope of dialogue, and the relative rigidity of multi-year programme of work, which makes it difficult to react to emerging issues and developments, such as climate change, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, forest restoration and the valuation of ecosystem services. Many of these policy issues have received greater attention outside the Forum. A critical constraint has been the lack of a financing mechanism. Although the international arrangement on forests does not currently include a legally binding agreement on forests, the inclusion in the arrangement of a credible financing mechanism would make a significant difference.

21. The involvement and effectiveness of stakeholders, including major groups, has been limited by scarce resources, the limited space made available for dialogue

and the lack of involvement in recent years of two major groups: business and industry and local authorities.

VI. How the international arrangement on forests should be changed

Guiding principles

22. Any change made to the international arrangement on forests, so that it can become a strong and effective global institution, needs to be assessed in terms of its contribution to the following:

(a) A deep commitment to implementation by Governments;

(b) Adequate funding mechanisms to ensure that there is the capacity to carry out commitments;

(c) A transparent monitoring system with baselines, indicators, targets and firm reporting requirements to demonstrate progress in implementing commitments;

(d) A clear and fundamental cross-sectoral framework for policy development and implementation (the "forest plus" model should be widely adopted);

(e) Genuine engagement of civil society in the planning, implementation and monitoring of sustainable forest management policies, strengthened collaboration with and among all stakeholders and promotion of social dialogue (for example, between labour representatives and management and between communities and industry);

(f) A strengthened science-policy interface.

New and improved tools

23. The proposed United Nations forest assembly and secretariat could encourage greater attention to be paid to the principles set out above. If established, the assembly should be given a strong coordinating function, and emphasis should be placed on creating links with, and facilitating linkages among, existing networks, for example, science and technology networks.

24. A strategic global trust fund for sustainable forest management is needed, with a component for locally controlled forestry, including capacity-building for women, small forest landowners and communities. Work done in connection with the fund should be carefully coordinated with such FAO programmes as the Forest and Farm Facility. The fund should be used to address gaps in funding to support sustainable forest management from other agencies and should be complementary to the work of those agencies.

25. Major groups support the proposal for the appointment of a United Nations special envoy to provide a clear, strong message on the urgency of addressing forest-related issues and to encourage the linking of national and global strategic plans and policies. Major groups would like the special envoy to be given a clear mandate to engage with civil society.

26. The issue of forests needs to be given a higher profile in the sustainable development goals, including through the incorporation into the goals of strong and clear forest-related targets and indicators. The link that exists between forests and

other issues is especially clear for the proposed sustainable development goals on poverty, food security, health, women, water, energy, climate change and access to justice and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions. A mechanism and mandate must be established to implement forest-related targets as part of the sustainable development goals.

27. The non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests needs to be updated to reflect the sustainable development goals and other developments, such as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the climate crisis. Overall, full integration in sustainable forest management of measures to ensure respect for the rights and contributions of indigenous peoples, communities, small forest landowners, workers, women and youth must be given high priority.

VII. Increasing the effectiveness of the contribution of major groups

General

28. Efforts must be continued to ensure the full involvement of all major groups, including business and industry and local authorities, for a more complete expression of the views of civil society and the increased legitimacy that will bring to the groups' message.

29. Opportunities for meaningful dialogue at Forum sessions can be enhanced. One suggestion is to allow major groups to make brief comments at the end of each day.

30. The ongoing collaboration of major groups with existing and new mechanisms needs to be formalized. The creation of the Major Groups Partnership on Forests is a major step towards a more formal arrangement. The Partnership needs to be recognized formally.

31. An enhanced role for civil society must include the development of institutional mechanisms to mobilize major groups involvement in policy development, implementation and monitoring at the national level. On the basis of a substantive debate and a clear recognition of the strengths and limitations of civil society organizations, it is of particular importance that a clear and significant role be defined for major groups in monitoring the implementation of agreements.

Specific

32. The Forum should recognize the Major Groups Partnership on Forests as the official coordinating body of major groups within the Forum and grant it permanent observer status.

33. The Forum should explore the possibility of setting up an independent process for accrediting major groups organizations wishing to attend its sessions, as is done by some United Nations agencies. Such a process would provide greater opportunity for participation.

34. The Forum should support the idea of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and the Major Groups Partnership on Forests of designing mechanisms for

establishing collaborations with them and the idea of granting the Major Groups Partnership observer status in the Collaborative Partnership.

35. Institutional funding should be provided to the Major Groups Partnership on Forests, on an annual basis and from a strategic trust fund, to guarantee core funding to the organization. Moreover, adequate funding should be provided for the active participation of major groups in Forum sessions. The organization would thus be able to raise funds from other sources to enable it to carry out its work at the global level in support of the Forum and to support the implementation of the international arrangement on forests by major groups organizations.

VIII. Conclusion

36. Individuals, in their daily lives, through their families and communities, and, collectively, through organizations, the larger networks of which they are a part and, ultimately, through the Major Groups Partnership on Forests, see and feel the interconnections between family and community well-being, including women and youth, and the health of forests. The socioeconomic benefits arising from forests and respect for forests as ecosystems need not, and in fact must not, be treated as a set of complex, difficult "zero-sum" trade-offs. There are many examples around the world where this is not the case, where the interconnections are understood and treated in a harmonious and integrated way. Such a perspective is an essential component of the process leading to stronger commitments to and vigorous implementation of improved sustainable forest management around the world that will be both the cause and the effect of an improved and more effective international arrangement on forests. Major groups look forward to continuing to contribute to that perspective.